3: Latta Y-5 (1923-1948)1949 NS29 Yokuts NS29

343 covered with a brush and tule thatch and then with dirt. The roofs of these houses were so low that a man could probably not stand upright in them. Some of the tribes called the sweat house, *Mosh*.

The structure was generally quite small, probably never more than twelve or fourteen feet in length, and was not used as a dance house as was frequently done among other tribes. We do not know of its use as a council chamber, or assembly hall. What information the writer has been able to secure on [623] this subject indicates that the Yokuts probably used the house of the head man, or chief, for these purposes.

During the winter the sweat house was a regular sleeping place for the older men. The door generally faced the south, but if the house was on the south side of the stream it faced the stream. We are told that in some instances a brush shelter, or wind break, was erected on either side of a path leading from the sweat house to the water, which was never more than a few yards distance.

343 In using the sweat house, a fire was built in the center and
515 stones were heated in it. All openings were closed and water was poured upon the hot stones. In addition to the intense heat due to the closed door, as well as the smoke from the fire, the steam from the hot rocks soon brought the inmates to a state of profuse perspiration and near suffocation.

[413 During the time of sweating, a sweat stick, or scraper, was
237] used to remove the perspiration from the body. This scraper was sometimes made from a split elk rib. It was about eighteen inches long and curved both along its length and in cross section. The elk rib was split along the edges and the thin, concave inner half used.

After enduring this state of affairs as long as possible, during which time there probably was competition as to who would be the last one to leave the place, the opening cover was thrown aside and a group of yelling, perspiring Indians ran from the house and jumped into the water.

Often this form of bath was indulged in at night, after which those participating would go to their beds and to sleep. [512] In the morning, generally before sun-up, practically every Indian in the rancheria would have left his house, running and shouting, and would have bathed in the near-by stream.

I have been told by old Indians, and have proved by investigation, that the Yokuts sweat house was located at the

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622 Daiapnuca. He cannot remember their names, but knows that some of them were related to each other, i.e., they did not represent five different lineages. When a decision relative to a local group was to be made its chiefs had to act unanimously, and similarly all chiefs if the entire tribe were involved. The same informant continued:[28]

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> In a single village, if one chief suggested having a fandango, the others had to agree before he could go ahead with his plans. If one chief were thinking about something he wanted to do he would tell his winatum to get the other chief or chiefs. In the meantime he would go out to the fire which a winatum had built. A winatum notified the villagers that there was going to be a meeting. Everyone in camp who wished to go to the meeting could do so regardless of sex or age. The chief would start talking to the people as they gradually assembled. As he talked to the people, the other chiefs upon their arrival, talked among themselves, agreeing or disagreeing with what was being said publicly. The winatum of the chief who was making his speech would go to the others to see what they thought. If they all agreed to go ahead with the plan that had been suggested, all of them, including the instigator, held a low-voiced consultation about specific plans, for instance, the date of holding a fandango. Their decision was announced at once to the people, who were waiting to hear it. If a chief, while addressing an audience, said something wrong one of the others would speak up and correct him.

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The executive governing of the chiefs was of a paternal-judiciary type. That is to say, they were consulted for advice, and gave or denied permission for certain events to take place. Thus were preparations made for the annual mourning ceremony among the Wukchumni (Y) and Yandanchi (Y):[29]

> Families who had lost relatives during the year and wanted to make the mourning ceremony would talk about it among themselves. They had been saving money, and getting or making baskets in preparation for it. When they decided that they were ready they sent for the chief's winatum and told him to tell the chief what they wanted to do. The winatum went back to the chief. If there were other chiefs in the village they were summoned for a conference (as described above). If the chiefs thought enough money and supplies were obtainable to carry through their plans they would set the date for the affair at twelve days in the future. Then they sent their winatums to those neighboring tribes that they wanted to invite.

There were minor variations in the procedure not given in the above account. A Wobonuch (WM) informant described it as follows:[30]

> The month in which a mourning ceremony was to be held was tentatively set a year ahead. During that time everyone saved up for the celebration, especially the bereaved families. When the month drew near the most influential chief sent

[28] Joe Pohot; see Appendix.
[29] From Sam Garfield; see Appendix.
[30] From 'Merican Joe, George Dick, interpreter; see Appendix.

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finished. The chief was the first to enter the new sweat-house when the opening celebration was made. 622 344

In the late spring when the time approached for the villages to break up into summer camping groups, the chief would call his people together. He would tell them that his family was moving, that he thought it was time for all of them to go, and to return at a certain time in the late summer. After this most families would leave for their camps, but their departure and return was really a matter of their own choice. Generally members of a village moved about as they pleased. If a family wanted to move away, say to another village, or ahead of time to their summer camp, they were free to do so. The head of the family might tell the chief of his plans but in doing so he was rendering a courteous gesture rather than asking for permission. On moving into another village or camping in its vicinity, the chief of that place was notified by the customary call. Persons who camped about without advising a chief in the neighborhood of their business were open to suspicion.[84] 622 361 576

Beyond the guidance of ceremonial activities the chief's legal offices were few. The settlement of quarrels between individuals or families was often but not necessarily brought to the chief. Small disputes between families, quarrels between women, or between husbands and wives, or cases of divorce did not come before him. Sometimes the chief would hear of a protracted interfamily feud and would send his winatum to the parties concerned asking them to come to some agreement. But difficulties resulting in murder or serious personal injury were usually brought to his attention for settlement. If a family wanted revenge upon a malicious shaman, poisoner, or murderer to the extent of taking his life, the case had to be laid before the chief before any overt action could be taken. However, hot-headed men occasionally sought vengeance upon an enemy without consulting anyone; in such a case the culprit's family was free to retaliate. When the chief gave permission for a person who was regarded as a public enemy to be done away with, no retaliation could be taken by the victim's family. The chief, however, did not usually make a decision of this sort entirely by himself. If there were no other chiefs in the village he would ask the advice of a few venerable men. An angered man might forestall the chief's veto of his plans by consulting men whose opinion bore weight before going to the chief. Thus among the Wobonuch (WM): 622 578 627 [23]

[84] See anecdote, p. 394. [85] Informant George Dick.

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622 578 627 623 Men often had their wives or daughters taken by a shaman. If a woman refused to sleep with a doctor or go off with him he would make her fall ill and die.[36] A man who knew or suspected who the doctor was that had thus victimized women of his family would take steps for revenge. Instead of going directly to the chief he would consult first the old and respected men of the village or tribe. He would go to one old man like Joe ('Merican Joe) and explain his case. If Joe thought the offended man was justified he would say so; but he would then send him on to another old man to get his advice, at the same time telling him to express his (Joe's) views. The man would go to four or five such prominent elders and have their unanimous consent to action before approaching the chief. When he went to the chief he would present his case and say that all these men had advised a certain procedure. The chief might disagree but could not refuse in the face of contrary opinion. If the vengeful man had gone to the chief first and the chief had disapproved of the proposal to kill the shaman, that would have been the end of the matter.

[683] If a man knew positively that a doctor had killed a member of his family he could take it upon himself to kill the doctor. He would just get his bow and go out and hide around until he had a chance to shoot the doctor.[37]

622 627 683 Among the southern foothill Yokuts quarrels were settled by chiefs:

In the early reservation days at Tejon a Yauelmani shaman bewitched a Yaudanchi so that he awoke crazed, and soon died. When the Yaudanchi slew the poisoner the Yauelmani were incensed at the summary fate of their compatriot. But one of their chiefs restrained them and they laid down their bows, which seems to have been the end of the matter except for talk.[38]

Among the North Fork Mono a chief gave permission for revenge upon a murderer.

Sometimes a buzzard moiety medicine man might try to poison an eagle moiety person. If the poisoner did not confess and promise to save the person, the eagle captain [chief] went after the poisoner and killed him.

The bohenup [chief] had power of putting people to death for wrong-doing. If a person is bewitched he complains to bohenup of person who he thinks bewitched him. The bohenup sends people after the wizard. They tell him there is to be a big time [as a pretext]. They bring him to the bohenup and ask him to take the spell off the sick man. If he does not he is murdered in secret at a certain time. Perhaps the bohenup will say he is to be killed when the leaves come out on a certain tree.[39]

685 674 Neither among Yokuts nor Western Mono were there definite laws governing action or punishment for misdemeanors. Theft was practically unknown according to direct statements by informants, and none have ever been mentioned in anecdotal material. Food thefts need never have occurred as custom demanded the offering of food to anyone who came peacefully to one's door, and further, hungry poor were rare because of the chiefs' care for the needy.

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[36] See anecdote, p. 392.
[37] See anecdote, no. 2, p. 393.
[38] Kroeber, Handbook, 516.
[39] Gifford, field notes, 1915.

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money and food so adjusted that there was no unexpected loss to any of the participants. These matters, together with the wishes of other chiefs, the bereaved families, and guest tribes had to be managed to the satisfaction of all persons involved. This in itself is not so difficult, save that it called for executive talents which every man might not possess.

The greatest responsibility of a chief was the settlement of quarrels and granting permission to kill a supposed murderer. This responsibility was increased rather than lessened by the absence of codified legal system. A chief making an unsatisfactory decision could not excuse it on the ground that he was simply reading the law; he was personally responsible for the results of his counsel. To this end, he did not always depend upon his own judgment but sought the opinion of another chief or of respected elders. The hearing of cases did not take place publicly, but in or before the chief's house. This privacy did not matter, for a man who left dissatisfied aired his grievance to his neighbors. The community was small: there was little chance for secrecy, what one man knew, everybody knew. Lacking newspapers, gossip was rife. Popular sentiment turned against the chief who gave unfair decisions, or was suspected of self-aggrandizement. Such a man was not deposed from office, but gradually lost prestige. He was ignored in favor of another chief. If necessary, a new chief could be selected from among possible heirs, as a brother, or son, or even a cousin. Such a drastic procedure was rare, unless the incumbent were insensible. The chief, holding the highest place of respect in the community, would not care to lose it. Loss of respect, loss of prestige, in turn meant loss of wealth, a combination of disasters which no normal man wished to bring upon himself. The intriguing chief could and did hold office, but his selfish enterprises were carried on in secrecy and curbed by public opinion.

The foregoing discussion has attempted to demonstrate the factors in the political system of Yokuts and Western Mono culture whereby orderly social activity was maintained. The activities of its citizens were at once protected and restrained by two forces, one, based upon legality, the traditional authority vested in the chief; the other, based upon belief in sorcery, the occult power wielded largely by shamans. Chiefs and shamans, who sometimes combined these two forces in intrigue were in turn restrained in their activities by the threat of loss of prestige, and of untimely death.